

## Dulles Direct Newsletter July 2019

Welcome to the July edition of the Dulles Direct newsletter. As is usually the case, our July agenda has been full since the Board doesn't meet in August. Last week we held a Transit Summit, which has become an annual occurrence given the transformation of our transit system in the coming years. As Chairman of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission and member of the Metro Board, this topic is obviously of particular importance to me. I have much more on that below.

We recently held a groundbreaking ceremony for Hanson Park, which will be located on both sides of Evergreen Mills Road just west of Belmont Ridge. It is very exciting to see this project get off the ground, since we've been talking about and planning for it for many years. The park is expected to open in the spring of 2022 and be operated by the Loudoun County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services. This park will truly be a crown jewel for our area. Amenities of the 257-acre park include 17 lighted athletic fields (including the baseball diamonds and tennis courts we added back into the project, as well as a rectangular field, cricket pitch, and two artificial turf fields), the historic Lee-Hanson House, an event lodge and nature center, a skate plaza and disc golf course, a

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splash pad and playground with inclusive features and over 75 acres of recreational space such as hiking trails. I was pleased to be joined by my colleague Supervisor Tony Buffington (whose district the parks is in) at the groundbreaking. Tony and I have been working together on Hanson Park funding issues for most of this term.



Also this month, I attended the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Annual Retreat. Although I am no longer Chairman of COG, I'm still on the Board of Directors. This year's retreat was focused entirely on housing - what the Washington region needs, how to entice affordable housing, and where it should go. Overall, the DC region has a shortage of about 100,000 housing units based on what is planned to be built and what the demand is. Loudoun and Prince William Counties have seen extraordinary growth over the past two decades and we have certainly done our part accommodating this growth. Interestingly, the new Comprehensive Plan the Board just passed is pretty much in sync with what the regional projections show is needed for Loudoun. Beyond the housing discussion, I always enjoy the opportunity to talk to my colleagues from other jurisdictions about shared issues, and I once again had many good conversations on some specific issues we're working on.

## [Announcements](#)



**Matthew F. Letourneau**  
Dulles District Supervisor  
Loudoun County Board of  
Supervisors

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This past weekend, I had the opportunity to spend about 7 hours of the overnight shift with our LCSO Dulles South Patrol Deputies. I like to periodically spend some time out in the field so I can get a better sense of how things really work and what's happening in our community. As Finance Committee Chairman, all of the County's contracts and expenditures come through my committee, but it is one thing to see items on paper and another to see how they're really used in the field. We responded to calls and did some traffic enforcement. We have great, hard working deputies in Dulles South and I'm impressed by their professionalism and conflict resolution skills (which is a huge part of the job!).

Finally, I want to take a moment to congratulate our County Administrator, Tim Hemstreet. I work very closely with Tim. He is a consummate professional who works many long hours and oversees a huge range of tasks. Tim was just elected president of the National Association of County Administrators. With NACA, Tim will be providing information and resources for professional development to County administrators around the nation. I have full confidence that he'll do a fantastic job, and I'm glad that others will be able to share in the great work he is doing for Loudoun.

## DULLES UPDATES

### Braddock Road Widening Project Acceleration

As we've been discussing, I have made widening Braddock Road a priority. The best way to accomplish this - given debt constraints - is to break it into segments. One of the largest segments is between Royal Hunter Drive and the eastern entrance of Paul VI High School (the Paul VI site is located on Braddock Road near the intersection of Riding Center Drive). In the adopted FY20 budget, we have \$29,605,000 budgeted for designing and constructing this segment - with nearly \$20 million of this funding not budgeted until FY22.

Paul VI is scheduled to open in September 2020, so I've been working with staff to find a way to get the

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segment nearest the school done earlier. We recognized an opportunity to approach Van Metre, who has a contractor already mobilized on the Gum Spring / Braddock intersection improvement project. We were able to work out an agreement to have their work extend further east using a tool called "furtherance of a proffer." Under the agreement, Van Metre will be responsible for design and construction of the widening of Braddock Road to the Paul VI eastern entrance and the County will pay their contractor for the additional cost of the expanded project, which is expected to be about \$4 million. This will allow this particular segment to be completed much sooner, and at a lower cost. We anticipate construction beginning in March 2020 and completed by August 2020.

In other Braddock Road news, contract work associated with widening Braddock in the area of Supreme / Summerall Drive is expected to go out to bid this year. We will be looking at the widening from Royal Hunter to Gum Spring as a separate project, although there may be a proffer associated with potential development on the southwest corner of Braddock and Gum Spring: you may recall Braddock Spring / Ridge View that Peterson Companies had proposed earlier this year on the southwestern quadrant of the intersection. Widening further east on Braddock will be approached as funding levels allow in future CIP years.

My goal is to get to Loudoun County Parkway with the widening. In order to have an impact further east, we'll need action in Fairfax County. On that front, VDOT has not yet finalized the Braddock Road corridor study they initiated at my request. That report is expected to include potential solutions to the congestion at Old Lee Road and at the "S" Curve, which will then have to be funded and executed, likely by a partnership between VDOT and Fairfax County.

### **Whitman South Commercial Application**

In September, the Board of Supervisors will be voting on a revised Whitman South application. The Whitman

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South property is located at the southeast quadrant of Braddock and Gum Spring, in the parcel next to Paul VI High School. You may recall there was an internet rumor that Sonic would be opening in that location. When that rumor hit (and spread like wildfire), I told you that I had confirmed there were some conversations between a potential Sonic franchise owner and Van Metre, but no agreement - and none was ever reached.

In any event, the current approval on that site allows for 35,000 square feet of commercial retail and service uses, a convenience store with gas pumps, and a 12,800 square foot child care center.

The new application increases the size of the project to 57,000 square feet, and adds an automotive service station (without gas pumps so essentially a service center) and a small drive through restaurant (although there is no tenant identified yet). All of this would be on a larger site than the original application since they have increased the acreage from 8.9 acres to 15.9 acres by expanding south to where an existing cell tower sits. Both then and now, the anchor tenant is a grocery store user. Besides the service center, the main changes are driven by the grocery tenant's desire for a stand alone building without in-line retail, so the smaller retail spaces are being moved to stand alone structures.

The Board had a public hearing about the application on July 10. Several Supervisors expressed support for the application. The Dulles Farms HOA, which includes Virginia Manor, has expressed concerns. I moved the item to the September 3 meeting to allow time for the applicant to meet with the HOA to work out some of those concerns, which include the use of open space in the application, buffering and traffic flow. This land parcel is an interesting situation, because the zoning district is Planned Development-Commercial Center-Community Center (PD-CC-CC), which is not a transition area zoning designation. However, the location of the parcel is in the transition area, which requires 50% open space. The applicant is providing a total of 56% open space on this

application. Staff is recommending approval because the application meets those requirements. We'll see what further discussions yield.

### **Route 28 Merging Issues Update**

There is congestion due to merging issues on 28 North in two spots - at Route 50 and further up at 267. As I've previously reported, 28 is being widened at the 50 intersection to McLearen Road to allow for better merging.

Further north, construction between the Dulles Toll Road and Sterling Boulevard is modifying the ramps but is not extending or reconfiguring any of them. Supervisor Ron Meyer and I brought up this concern at a recent meeting of the Route 28 Commission. VDOT is currently conducting a Route 28 Interchange Study to identify issues in the corridor, including merge and weave problems. At our July 18 Business Meeting, the Board voted to send VDOT a letter asking them to address poor ramp configuration in the study. We asked them to consider adding a merge lane from westbound Dulles Toll Road onto northbound Route 28 and expanding the merge area at the Route 606 ramps on northbound 28. It is our hope that VDOT will include these potential fixes in their finalized study. Study results and concepts for solutions will be presented to the public later this year.

### **Tall Cedars / Elk Lick Interim Improvements**

VDOT's contractor installed interim improvements at the Tall Cedars / Elk Lick intersection over the weekend of July 20 and 21. This change has come about after five years of active study and work on this very problematic intersection. In 2018, we closed the median on Route 50 at Elk Lick Road to allow right-in and right-out turning movements at Route 50. We also installed a new lane configuration on Defender Drive between Elk Lick and South Riding Boulevard since we expected an increase in traffic volume to be rerouted when the median closed. Unfortunately, our traffic pattern evaluation several months later did not show noticeable improvement at the Tall Cedars

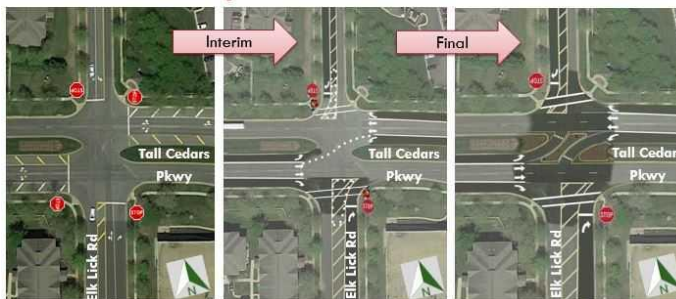


intersection. Accidents were still occurring at an alarming rate of once every 35 days. The new interim improvements are aimed at removing the conflict points that were leading to so many crashes while permitting as much access that can be accommodated safely.

I have traveled through this intersection quite frequently since the change was made (including when I was with LCSO on patrol) and I've noticed vehicles adjusting and no longer slowing down at the intersection, and also realizing that if they are going to turn they need to be lined up on the other side of the flex posts.

You can see the presentation from the Town Hall meeting I conducted on this topic back in February [here](#). We removed the stop signs on Tall Cedars Parkway and restricted left turns from Elk Lick Road. The existing pavement markings were removed and flex posts were installed to channelize turns from Tall Cedars onto Elk Lick and prevent Elk Lick traffic from crossing Tall Cedars or making a left. The final project will be completed during 2020 to coincide with VDOT's repaving of Tall Cedars Parkway. This is the same design that was successfully implemented at Center Street in Loudoun County Parkway. In the graphic below, this interim improvement is the middle picture.

**Tall Cedars Parkway and Elk Lick Road**



The new configuration will change some traffic patterns, but traffic studies have shown no major issues are expected. We will, however, be monitoring

everything carefully. The amount of parallel connectivity in this area means that drivers will be able to adjust their trips accordingly. I have gotten many questions about our plans for this intersection, and a few complaints. A few weeks ago we included the following in an email update, which I'll repeat below:

FAQs:

*Why not just put in a traffic signal?*

The VDOT minimum separation required for intersections with traffic signals is 1,050 feet. This intersection is 720 feet from the South Riding Boulevard / Tall Cedars Parkway signalized intersection and therefore does not meet the minimum standard. In addition, removing the traffic signals on Tall Cedars will improve the level of service on Tall Cedars Parkway, which has much more traffic volume than the other roads in the vicinity. Tall Cedars is an important artery that serves as a reliever for Route 50.

*Why not a roundabout?*

Tall Cedars Parkway is 4 lanes (2 in each direction). The only roundabout that would fit in this intersection would be a single lane roundabout. Therefore, Tall Cedars would have to channel down to 2 lanes. Traffic studies show that would create a great deal more congestion, and back ups would extend in both directions through South Riding Boulevard and Loudoun County Parkway. A larger roundabout would require us to take a great deal of property and would impact residential structures. Such a project would take many years and cost tens of millions of dollars to complete.

*Does a change really need to be made?*

All of us involved in this lengthy process are in agreement that we must take action. Beyond just the poor accident rate, numerous field observers including Sheriff's deputies, VDOT engineers, and traffic consultants have all observed numerous, repeated near-



misses. We do not believe that the operation of this intersection will improve - its proximity to the signalized intersection at South Riding and the standard challenges with four way stop signs and ever-increasing volume have made it necessary to take steps to improve safety.

I certainly recognize that the changes will make some movements less convenient for those in the immediate vicinity. However, there does exist a significant parallel road network, and there are alternate routes available in every direction. Of course, as I said we will be monitoring those alternatives after these changes are made.

Long term, we will be installing medians and curb cuts in this area and removing the flex posts. That will happen in about a year.

#### **Braddock / Northstar Warrant Analysis Results**

At our July 18 Business Meeting, the Board formally accepted the results of a VDOT warrant analysis for a signal at the Braddock Road and Northstar Boulevard intersection. This is the second time that Supervisor Buffington and I had a warrant analysis done for this intersection - the first time (2016) it did not meet warrant. This time, in light of the Lightridge High School project, it did. VDOT also approved a multi-way stop as an interim measure at the Braddock and Trailhead Drive intersection until a more thorough approach (traffic signal or roundabout) is justified and approved. We anticipated this result and therefore asked LCPS to budget for these things in their school construction budget, which they have done. They are responsible for constructing both the Braddock / Northstar signal and the Braddock / Trailhead multi-way stop as part of the new Lightridge High School and ES-29 projects. Those projects are underway, with completion expected prior to Lightridge High School opening for school year 2020 / 2021.

#### **Tall Cedars / Riding Center Intersection**

Toll Brothers has informed me that the ship date for the signal mast arms has been delayed once more and is now scheduled for early August. This delay is out of their control. As I have reported before, a steel shortage is responsible for the difficulty in obtaining parts to construct traffic signals all along the east coast. Toll Brothers' contractor has indicated about a two week lead time for the mast arms to ship and process, then another month for installation. That puts everything at the intersection operational by the end of September, best case scenario. I was hoping they would have the signal fully operational before the start of school, but that doesn't look like it's going to happen. I will be certain to keep you posted if anything changes.

### **Tall Cedars / Stone Springs Intersection**

We have seen some significant delays on finalizing the design of this signal due to required changes necessitated to avoid a large water main at the intersection. While working through the process to get the final designs completed and approved by VDOT, the County is now working to have flashing beacons installed on the existing stop signs. Cost estimates are currently being secured and once a contractor has been selected and permits obtained, the beacons will be installed to assist in the short term. I expect the actual signal project to be out to bid late this year with construction likely in early 2020. This has been one of the longest signal construction projects ever, and a poster child for what is wrong with the signal process. I was able to address this issue directly with the Virginia Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Transportation and used this signal as an example. VDOT is evaluating changes we have proposed to help speed things up.

## **LOUDOUN UPDATES**

### **2019 Transit Summit**

On July 23, the Board held our annual Transit Summit at the Government Center. I appreciate these meetings because they give us a chance to delve deep into a few important transit issues that impact the County in the context of regional development. I believe I have a

somewhat unique perspective on these matters due to my time with Metro Board and NVTC. With Metro coming to Loudoun in 2020 or 2021 (my guess is the first quarter of 2021), the County will see a major shift in our transit systems. At this year's summit, the Board made a few decisions and gave staff direction to keep working on others. We decided to provide our own Paratransit service (Paratransit is a federal requirement around all transit stops) rather than opting into MetroAccess. The costs associated with both were similar, but based on my experience I believe we can serve these riders better with our own contracted service. Loudoun is entering the Metro system in a unique way, as we will be the only jurisdiction without Metro bus service, which was agreed upon in 2012. This necessitates the Metro board amending their funding formula to allow Loudoun not to pay for subsidizing the bus service. I have been working on this issue for most of this year, as it requires some careful navigating between jurisdictions. Opting out of MetroAccess makes this a simpler discussion, and I think it also will allow for a better level of service.

Another issue was the future of the Dulles North Transit Center off 606, which is also adjacent to the Loudoun Gateway Metro Station. This park and ride lot sits on federal, MWAA owned land, and its location next to a paid Metro parking garage is going to create problems once Metro service begins. The County has been negotiating with MWAA for an alternative lot nearby, and based on the progress made in those talks, the Board directed that the Dulles North lot be replaced with the new site in a different location when revenue service begins.

Finally, a big topic of discussion has been the bus route network once train service starts. Most of the current routes to Metro will shift to closer stations. Staff shared some proposals with the Board and I was very disappointed that the Dulles South area did not have any new routes proposed, but just had the current Route 88x, which went to different stations. The vision I have for our transit system is to shift to more neighborhood stops with convenient service. I believe

that residents who commute to Reston, Tysons, and beyond are more likely to use transit if we make it easy to pick up a bus in their neighborhood and make a one stop connection to the Silver Line. I therefore asked staff to work on an additional route with neighborhood pick ups that would use the 606 corridor and connect to the Loudoun Gateway station. This solution would also create opportunities for the thousands of people that work along 606 in the industrial and office complexes to get to work without driving. I received support from the Board for this concept and staff will be bringing back a specific route proposal.

### **TRIP II Dulles Greenway Traffic Operations Report**

Toll Road Investors Partnership II (TRIP II), the operator of the Dulles Greenway, is required to deliver an annual traffic operations report. Whether or not this was occurring in the past I don't know, but it is now at the request of myself and Supervisor Buffington. We heard this year's report at our July 18 Business Meeting.

I've written extensively in the past about issues we've had with the Greenway. County staff indicated in their analysis of TRIP II's report that volume decrease numbers were exaggerated. This is likely due to the agreement TRIP II has with VDOT that they are responsible to make road improvements when the level of service (based on traffic volume) dips below a certain level. Less volume for the Greenway means a higher level of service for longer, which means less cash out of pocket for road improvements. It is easy to see why they would want to inflate the volume decrease for their own benefit. However, there has definitely been *some* decrease in volume on the Greenway. This harkens all the way back to our discussion of higher tolls earlier this year, when I said the tolls were materially discouraging use of the toll road. Either way, the information bears poorly for the Greenway and is good for our case against continued toll increases.

If you've followed my discussions over the last year regarding the Greenway, you'll know that the Board of Supervisors voted 8-1 to oppose any deal to extend toll increases on the Greenway and has been pushing for meaningful distance based pricing (not the sham off-peak minor discount that was proposed). At the Business Meeting, the Board voted to send a letter to VDOT requesting that they uphold their agreement with the Greenway and enforce accurate volume analysis, particularly of certain on and off ramps that have poor ratings during rush hour. The County and commuters deserve to know actual numbers and whether or not the Greenway should be making road improvements.

### **Airbus Expansion**

Our Economic Development team in Loudoun, led by Buddy Rizer, does consistently amazing work attracting commercial business. The latest example is a major deal for Airbus / Satair's East Coast parts distribution facility. Airbus' facility has been located here in Loudoun for some time, but they decided to sell their property in Ashburn after merging with Satair, a logistics and parts company. Their quest for a combined facility led to some fierce competition among jurisdictions with major airports on the east coast, but in the end we were able to beat them out.

The new building will be located in the Northwoods Industrial Park off Route 606. It will bring more jobs and revenue to the County and will enable us to keep our good relationship with one of the biggest aerospace companies in the world. The Board of Supervisors voted to approve a \$125,000 incentive package at our July 2 meeting, which is contingent on certain items that will increase revenue more than our investment. I am looking forward to seeing Airbus' new infrastructure.

### **Loudoun United Ribbon Cutting & Opening Day**

At long last, I am happy to announce that Loudoun United's new stadium at Bolen Park will be opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Saturday, August 3.

We also have a name for their stadium: Segra Field. Segra is one of the largest independent fiber bandwidth companies in the United States, and will be sponsoring the stadium and team.

The ribbon cutting on August 3 will start at 5 PM at 42095 Loudoun United Drive in Leesburg (the makeup date in case it rains is Wednesday, August 7 at 4 PM). The event is open to the public and will include a fan fest with players and coaches, as well as a chance to get a first look at the stadium. It will be a fun event for the whole family, so please come out! You can RSVP for the ribbon cutting [here](#).

Opening day is Friday, August 9 at 7:30 PM. Loudoun United will be taking on the Charlotte Independence in their first game at their home field here in the County. [Tickets are available now!](#)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Ellie's Hats Golf Tournament**

Ellie's Hats is a South Riding nonprofit dedicated to helping children who are battling cancer. The second annual Ellie's Hats Open golf tournament will take place on Friday, September 20 with proceeds benefitting the organization. The South Riding Golf Course at 43237 Golf View Drive will host the tournament, which begins at 9 AM after breakfast at 7. The event contact is Jay Coakley, who can be reached at [jay@ellieshats.org](mailto:jay@ellieshats.org). Click [here](#) for more information and to register for the tournament.

### **Lunsford Middle School Veterans Day Program**

Drew Sansonetti, a teacher at Lunsford Middle School, is working with students to develop a Veterans Day program for later this year. To thank veterans for their service and sacrifice, the school's leadership is inviting veterans to Lunsford to talk to students about their military service. The veterans will also serve as judges in a patriotic poster competition that the students put on. The event will run from 8:40 - 10 AM on Veterans

Day, which is Monday, November 11 this year. Lunsford is looking for 105 veterans or current Armed Forces members to attend the event. For more information, please reach out to Mr. Sansonetti directly at [drew.sansonetti@lcps.org](mailto:drew.sansonetti@lcps.org) or 412-480-9929.

### **LCSO Quarterly Public Safety Meeting**

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office will hold its quarterly public safety meeting at the Dulles South Public Safety Center (25216 Loudoun County Parkway in South Riding) on August 29 at 7 PM. Residents are encouraged to attend.

### **Dulles South Food Pantry**

The Dulles South Food Pantry provides food assistance up to twice a month to any person who resides in the school attendance zones for Freedom High School, John Champe High School, Independence High School, Rock Ridge High School and Briar Woods High School. The Pantry also provides one-time emergency food assistance to anyone in need. The food pantry is open Wednesdays in the historic white chapel at Arcola United Methodist Church, 24757 Evergreen Mills Road, Dulles, VA 20166. Call 703-507-2795 or email [info@dsfp.org](mailto:info@dsfp.org) to schedule an appointment. See the Dulles South Food Pantry's website at <http://www.dsfp.org/> for information on how you can help the food pantry fight local hunger. Donations to the Dulles South Food Pantry, Inc. are tax deductible.

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